

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03998 01 OF 02 171415Z
ACTION SS-25

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-----057899 171420Z /46

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8740

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3998

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MILI, PINT, LE

SUBJECT LEBANON: VIEWS OF FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS

1. FONMIN BOUTROS CALLED ME AT HOME MORNING JULY 17 AND ASKED ME TO COME BY AND CALL ON HIM AT FOREIGN MINISTRY AT 1030. FOREIGN MINISTRY IS IN ASHRAFIYAH FREE FIRE ZONE AND I DECIDED TO GO ONLY AFTER RSO HAD MADE ROUTE RECONNAISSANCE. LOCAL FOLKLORE HAS ONLY TEN PERCENT OF POPULATION LEFT IN ASHRAFIEH AND AREA DOES INDEED LOOK SOMEWHAT LIKE A GHOST TOWN. THERE ARE A FEW CARS ON THE STREETS BUT SHOPS ARE ALMOST ALL CLOSED AND THERE IS LITTLE SIGN OF LIFE EXCEPT AT A MILITIA CHECKPOINT WHERE WE WERE WAVED ON. AS WE WERE SITTING IN HIS OFFICE BOUTROS POINTED OUT BULLET HOLE IN WINDOW THAT HAD OCCURRED A HALF HOUR AFTER HE LEFT THE OFFICE ON SATURDAY.

2. I DELIVERED TO BOUTROS MESSAGE OF SECRETARY TO

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 03998 01 OF 02 171415Z

SARKIS EXPRESSING PLEASURE WITH LATTER'S DECISION REMAIN ON THE JOB. I SAID WE ALL SHARED THIS FEELING BUT I FRANKLY HAD BEEN RATHER DISAPPOINTED WITH PRESIDENT'S SPEECH ON SATURDAY NIGHT. IT HAD BEEN POORLY PRESENTED AND PRESIDENT HAD TOUCHED SO HURRIEDLY ON MAIN POINTS THAT MUCH OF IMPACT HAD BEEN LOST. NEVERTHELESS HE HAD SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO SAY AND ISSUE TODAY WAS

HOW HIS IDEAS WERE TO BE IMPLEMENTED.

3. BOUTROS AGREED THAT APEECH HAD BEEN POORLY DONE AND SAID PRESIDENT HAD BEEN UNWILLING MAKE POINTS FORCEFULLY AS BOUTROS HAD URGED HIM TO DO. HE HAD FOLLOWING TO SAY ABOUT FOLLOW-UP:

A. CONSCRIPTION. GOL WOULD HAVE TO FOLLOW MILITARY SERVICE LAW AND NOT GHASSAN TUENI'S CONCEPT OF CONSCRIPTING ALL THE MILITIAS. THAT WAS THEORETICAL PROPOSAL WHICH WOULD NOT WORK IN PRACTICE. THEY WOULD BE DRAFTING MEN OVER ALL COUNTRY TO TRY TO MAINTAIN A BALANCE.

B. ARMY TO THE SOUTH. HE WAS TO MEET FOLLOWING DAY WITH THE PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER AND GENERAL KHOURY TO DISCUSS AND TAKE FINAL DECISION ON WHAT TO DO ABOUT SENDING TROOPS TO THE SOUTH. WE DISCUSSED THIS QUESTION IN MORE DETAIL LATER IN CONVERSATION. (SEE BELOW)

C. HE WAS RECOMMENDING TO PRESIDENT THAT HE HAD TO APPOINT A POLITICAL CABINET. PRESENT GOVERNMENT COULD NO LONGER CUT THE MUSTARD. PRESIDENT SHOULD SELECT PEOPLE HE WANTED IN CABINET AND APPOINT THEM WITHOUT CONSULTING ALL OF THE POLITICAL GROUPS OF THE COUNTRY. HE SHOULD IMPOSE CABINET.

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 03998 01 OF 02 171415Z

4. I NOTED THAT I HAD NEVER GIVEN BOUTROS ANSWERS TO THE THREE QUESTIONSHE HAD POSED TO ME ABOUT THE ISRAELIS ON JUNE 24 (BEIRUT 3504). BOUTROS SAID THAT WAS RIGHT AND THAT WAS WHY HE WANTED ME TO COME SEE HIM. I SAID ISRAELIS IN FIRST PLACE WERE NOT CONVINCED THAT THE LEBANESE WERE ABLE TO SEND TROOPS SOUTH. THEY FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE THEY COULD DO SO GIVEN CURRENT SECURITY MESS IN NORTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY. SECONDLY, ISRAELIS WERE HAPPY WITH PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN SOUTH LEBANON AND WOULD LIKE IT TO REMAIN AS IT WAS. INTRODUCTION OF LEBANESE ARMY WOULD COMPLICATE SITUATION. I THOUGHT IT VERY UNLIKELY THAT ISRAELIS WOULD AGREE TO FACILITATE ENTRY OF LEBANESE TROOPS INTO THE ENCLAVES. QUESTION WAS WHETHER THEY WOULD INCITE MILITIA AGAINST THEM. IF LEBANESE WERE NEGOTIATING DIRECTLY WITH ISRAELIS, PERHAPS THERE COULD BE SOME UNDERSTANDING WITH THEM, BUT I THOUGHT IT MIGHT VERY WELL BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE FOR US TO GO BACK TO THE ISRAELIS AT THIS POINT ON THIS ISSUE GIVEN PRESSURES WE HAD PUT ON THEM REGARDING SITUATION IN BEIRUT AND AID TO CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. IN CURCUMSTANCES IT SEEMED TO ME THAT WHAT LEBANESE SHOULD DO WAS SEND A TOKEN FORCE INTO THE AREA CONTROLLED BY UNIFIL AND TO MAKE THAT FIRST STEP IN GRADUAL RETURN TO ENTIRE AREA.

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03998 02 OF 02 171407Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 3998

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5. BOUTROS ASKED WHAT ROLE I WOULD ENVISAGE LEBANESE ARMY PLAYING IN UNIFIL AREA. I SAID THEY COULD HELP UNIFIL WITH ITS TASK. HE SAID PROBLEM WITH THIS WAS THAT THEY WOULD BE ACTING AGAINST PALESTINIANS WHILE THEY WOULD BE DOING NOTHING ABOUT MILITIAS WHO WERE IN TRAITOROUS COOPERATION WITH ISRAEL. MOSLEMS WERE LIKELY TO OBJECT TO THIS AS BEING UNBALANCED AND TO OPPOSE SUCH STEPS. THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT IT. I SAID THIS WAS OF COURSE A RECURRING LEBANESE PROBLEM, AND WHATEVER THEY DID SOMEONE WAS GOING TO OPPOSE IT. THEY OUGHT TO DECIDE WHAT WAS IN LEBANON'S INTEREST AND GO AHEAD AND DO IT. THEY SHOULD RECONCILE THEMSELVES TO THE FACT THEY WERE NOT GOING TO GET ANY GREEN LIGHT FROM THE ISRAELIS. AT SAME TIME THEY WOULD HAVE TO REALIZE THAT IF THEY DID NOT SEND A CONTINGENT DOWN THE FRENCH WERE LIKELY TO WITHDRAW AND UNIFIL WAS LIKELY TO COLLAPSE.

6. BOUTROS NOTED THAT HE WOULD BE DISCUSSING THIS IN THE
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 03998 02 OF 02 171407Z

MORNING AND ASKED THAT WE NOT RAISE MATTER WITH ISRAELIS
UNTIL WE HEARD FURTHER FROM HIM. HE THEN CALLED THE
PRESIDENT AND ARRANGED FOR ME TO CALL ON THE PRESIDENT AT
1230 TOMORROW MORNING. HE SAID PRESIDENT WANTED TO TALK TO
ME ABOUT THE SOUTH.

ACTION REQUESTED. REQUEST DEPARTMENT INFORM ME BY
IMMEDIATE CABLE WHETHER WE DO OR DO NOT WANT LEBANESE TO
SEND TROOPS TO SOUTH. SHOULD I OR SHOULD I NOT ENCOURAGE
SARKIS TO TAKE THE BULL BY THE HORNS AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT
IT? SARKIS NOW HAS IMPRESSION AS A RESULT OF MY CAUTIOUS
FORMULATIONS THAT WE ARE UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT LEBANESE
MOVING SOUTH.
PARKER

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